

Progress to Date

Nigel Kirby, DFID Project Manager, and Jimmy Johnston, Basil Read Project Director, visited the island from 4th to 12th October. During their visit, discussions took place with key stakeholders on (1) project progress to date, (2) proposals for the permanent jetty in Ruperts, and (3) moving the emphasis onto wider economic development.

During their visit, Nigel and Jimmy were able to see progress on the ground. Both remarked that it is one thing to read about the work taking place under the project but another thing to see it for themselves! Nigel said that he was impressed with progress to date. He commented that in less than a year since the signature of the Airport Project Contract, Basil Read has addressed two of the main challenges under the project.

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St Helena Airport



The NP Glory 4

The first challenge related the logistics of getting plant, equipment and materials to the island. This has been overcome through having the NP Glory 4. The vessel is now fully established on her 22 day cycle between Ruperts Bay and Walvis Bay.

This photo was taken during the last call of the NP Glory 4 and shows the view from the vessel onto the temporary jetty at Ruperts. The vessel was jam packed with plant and equipment for the project.



Plant in operation on PBP

The second challenge related to getting plant and equipment from Ruperts to Prosperous Bay Plain. The Access Track was completed at the end of August and the majority of major construction equipment, including 40 tonne articulated dump trucks, 70 tonne excavators, drilling rigs, crusher plant and concrete batching plant are now established at the main airport

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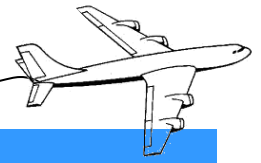
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Project Progress—Works in Dry Gut



Access Track into Dry Gut, overlooking one of the drill rigs in operation

The most recent developments are in Dry Gut. The Access track into Dry Gut was completed in September and permanent construction work is starting in this area. Basil Read will now need eight and half million cubic metres of rockfill for Dry Gut. This is an incredible amount of fill and works in Dry Gut will take Basil Read approximately two years to complete.

Whilst some smaller blasts have taken place in Dry Gut, bigger and more frequent blasting operations are still to follow.

PLEASE BE REMINDED THAT PROSPEROUS BAY PLAIN AND DRY GUT REMAIN CLOSED IN THE INTERESTS OF PUBLIC SAFETY.

Permanent Jetty

As reported previously, a provisional sum is available alongside the Airport Project for the purpose of constructing a permanent jetty in Ruperts. The permanent jetty will need to enable a variety of vessels to come alongside. In the longer-term this will allow cargo operations to be transferred from James Bay to Ruperts Bay. Having seen the difference the temporary jetty is making and how smooth cargo unloading has been with the NP Glory 4 pulled up alongside the jetty, it is clear that this type of operation is something that St Helena could benefit from in the long-run.



Quarry Investigations in Ruperts— © Halcrow

Unfortunately, the projected cost of the permanent jetty came in above the amount currently available. Whilst Nigel and Jimmy were on-island, detailed discussions took place on this matter. Basil Read has been collecting additional wave data and has been investigating alternative quarry sources to provide details for the Basil Read designers in Jo'Burg. This will enable us to review the designs to see if there were ways in which costs could be reduced.

No decisions were taken during Nigel and Jimmy's visit but this is an area where discussions are still underway. Further updates on this issue will be provided in due course.

Moving towards Economic Development

For those of us involved in the Airport Project, it is easy to forget that the airport itself is only a means to an end. The Airport will improve access to St Helena, enabling more visitors to come to the island and creating better links with the outside world. This will create opportunities for economic development.

The Airport Project is on time, on budget and to specification. Alongside all of the work to construct the airport, St Helena's focus needs to be on how the island can access the opportunities that the airport will bring. This formed the subject of discussions with Enterprise St Helena during Nigel and Jimmy's visit.

Jimmy Johnston is originally from the Isle of Bute, a small island off the west coast of Scotland. He pointed out that there are a number of comparisons to be made between the two islands. Both have small resident populations and both are in a situation of economic decline where the majority of the working age population left to find work overseas. The main difference is that in St Helena the airport will create the potential to reverse the island's economic decline. Lets not waste the opportunities that the airport will bring!